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## Aid for Rockaways Factory Hits Sweet Spot

By: Mara Gay



New York City has awarded \$13.2 million in recovery funds to Madelaine Chocolate Co., one of the largest employers in the city hit by superstorm Sandy.

Madelaine officials said last year they would likely need to move outside New York if they didn't receive \$10 million in Sandy aid from the city.

They said the chocolate company, the largest private employer in the Rockaways section of Queens, sustained about \$50 million in damage in the October, 2012, storm, leaving most of its chocolate-molding lines inoperable and the business unable to hire back many of its employees.

With the new funding, Madelaine's will be able to double its roughly 113-member workforce within two years, city and company officials said.

"These are union jobs," said Maria Torres-Springer, commissioner of the city's Department of Small Business Services, which administers federal funds to Sandy-affected companies.

"We view this as an investment in order to make sure not just that the company recovers but that the people who lost their jobs because of the storm can be rehired," Ms. Torres-Springer said.

The city's announcement comes amid changes to the federal Hurricane Sandy Business Loan and Grant Program under the administration of Mayor Bill de Blasio, which worked with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to raise the cap for small businesses affected by the storm.

Until July, the program offered loans of up to \$150,000 and matching grants of up to \$60,000, and businesses that demonstrated extreme need could be eligible for loans up to \$1 million and grants up to \$100,000.

Of the total award to Madelaine's, \$9.7 million will come from the Sandy program administered by the Department of Small Business Services, representing nearly a quarter of the total \$42 million in federal disaster funds it will distribute.

A spokeswoman for Mr. de Blasio said the effort to keep Madelaine's in the city is part of a larger push to tie Sandy funds allocated by the city to job growth in areas like the Rockaways.

Madelaine officials said the funding would help them make much-needed repairs to delicate chocolate-making equipment that was severely damaged by floodwaters more than two years ago.

"We're very grateful," said Jorge Farber, Madelaine's chief executive and a member of the family that founded the company.

"We're staying and we'll do what we need to do to bring our employees back."